



MINISTRY OF EDUCATION

Examinations in Secondary Schools

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# The Certificate of Secondary Education

A Proposal for  
a New School Leaving Certificate  
other than the G.C.E.

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*Fourth Report of the  
Secondary School Examinations Council  
1961*



LONDON

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## Foreword

This Fourth Report of the Secondary School Examinations Council takes into its final stage the Council's work on examinations other than the G.C.E. I published in September 1960 the report of the Committee set up by the Council under the Chairmanship of Mr. Beloe to study the question and the Council have now offered their considered advice in the light of the further comments received.

The publication of this further Report gives me the opportunity to thank Dr. Lockwood and the other members of the Council for this further contribution which will be of great assistance to me in reaching a decision on a matter which will have profound repercussions on the schools.

DAVID ECCLES.

*Ministry of Education.*  
*23rd May, 1961.*

3 May, 1961.

MY DEAR MINISTER,

I have the honour to submit the Fourth Report of the Secondary School Examinations Council. The Council's Third Report, which I submitted to you in July, 1960, dealt with the G.C.E. Examination and with proposals for reform of that examination at Advanced level. This Report deals with the problems of secondary school examinations other than the G.C.E., and gives the considered views of the Council on the recommendations of their Committee under the chairmanship of Mr. Beloe, whose Report you published at the Council's request in 1960.

In my letter to you of 21st July, 1960, presenting that Report I explained that the Council, while warmly welcoming the Report of their Committee and believing that it would form a suitable basis for public discussion and for consultation with the Associations concerned, did not wish to be taken as necessarily endorsing all its findings and recommendations at that stage. I said that they would like to consider these more fully in the light of the Associations' comments and of public discussion, and that they hoped then to be in a position to put to you their own conclusions and recommendations. The Report which I now submit is the outcome of the Council's further deliberations and embodies their considered recommendations. They hope that you will agree to publish this Report.

As you will see, they have reached the conclusion, from which no member of the Council dissented, and which was supported by the great majority of the Bodies primarily concerned, that they should recommend you to accept in principle the main conclusion reached by their Committee. This conclusion was that there should be recognised subject examinations on a regional basis, largely and effectively under the control of teachers, co-ordinated by a central body which would be assisted by a research and development unit and on whose advice the Minister's recognition would be given. The examinations should be designed for a lower level of ability than the G.C.E. examination and would be taken at the end of not less than five years' secondary education. The Council hope that you will be able to give them an early decision on this main recommendation, and they much hope that it will be favourable.

The Council were clear that, in the event of this recommendation being acceptable to you, there would be need for further consideration of the detailed arrangements for putting their proposal into effect, and for discussion with potential users of the examinations and with existing Examining Bodies. If your decision is favourable, they would like themselves to have the opportunity to consider further and to advise you on the arrangements for implementation. In that case I assume that you would wish to consider whether the constitution and membership of the Council would need to be modified, so as to ensure that they were a suitable body to undertake this further task.

Yours sincerely,

JOHN LOCKWOOD.

The Right Hon. Sir David Eccles, K.C.V.O., M.P.,  
Minister of Education.

## FOURTH REPORT

### The Certificate of Secondary Education

*(A Proposal for a New School Leaving Certificate other than the G.C.E.)*

#### Introduction

1. Since the inception of the General Certificate of Education examination, we have been concerned as a Council with the problem of examinations other than the G.C.E. for secondary schools. This problem has been brought increasingly to the fore by the major developments that have taken place in secondary education in recent years, and by the welcome and growing tendency of children in all types of schools to stay on beyond the statutory school leaving age. One facet of the problem which has lately caused us growing concern has been the marked growth of external examinations other than the G.C.E. which are taken by pupils in secondary schools, but are not recognised by the Minister; and this led us, in the spring of 1958, to ask our Chairman to write to the then Minister of Education informing him of our desire to set up a Committee to inquire into this whole matter of secondary school examinations other than the G.C.E. Having received from the Minister an assurance that he would not wish to stand in our way, we proceeded on 2nd July, 1958, to constitute a Committee, under the chairmanship of Mr. Robert Beloe, at that time Chief Education Officer for Surrey,

"to review current arrangements for the examination of secondary school pupils other than by the General Certificate of Education examination, to consider what developments are desirable, and to advise the Council whether, and if so, what, examinations should be introduced, and at what ages and levels."

The Committee, having been empowered to co-opt two additional members, co-opted two serving teachers, a headmaster of a comprehensive school and a headmistress of a county secondary school. The membership of the Committee is set out at Appendix A. As the Minister had asked that, in constituting the Committee, we should ensure that they kept in touch with the deliberations of the Central Advisory Council for Education (England), who were also giving special attention to the subject, the Committee, with the agreement of Sir Geoffrey Crowther, invited that body to appoint an observer who took part in the Committee's deliberations until the Central Advisory Council for Education (England) had completed and published their Report.

2. The Committee held 24 meetings, and took evidence, both written and oral, from representatives of local education authorities, technical college principals and employers, and from a number of Examining Bodies conducting examinations other than for the G.C.E., in addition to making inquiries from a representative sample of schools. They presented their Report to the Council on 4th July, 1960. The main conclusion of their Report, which was throughout unanimous, was that in view of the extent to which external examinations below the level of the G.C.E. had already developed, the prospect of their further growth, and the danger which this development of unrecognised and

unco-ordinated examinations constituted for the schools, the time had come for the Minister to encourage by his recognition schemes of regional examinations, on a subject basis, largely and effectively under the control of teachers, co-ordinated by a central body with the help of a research and development unit, and aimed at a level somewhat below that of the G.C.E. Ordinary level for pupils completing a five-year secondary school course. The Committee set out the criteria to which in their view these examinations should conform; and proposed arrangements by which the Examining Bodies might be brought into being and their schemes of examinations recognised.

3. At our meeting of 13th July, 1960, we warmly welcomed the Report and, while not at that stage endorsing all its findings and recommendations, we agreed to proceed with consultations with the associations primarily concerned, and we also agreed to ask the Minister to publish the Report. We made clear that we hoped to put to the Minister our own conclusions and recommendations on the action to be taken when we had had a fuller opportunity to study the findings of the Report, and the comments of the associations concerned and of the public generally.

4. The Minister published the Report\*, and in a Foreword commended it to all those specially concerned with the development of secondary education. He invited all who wished to do so to send comments to the Secretary of the Council. He made clear that before reaching his own conclusions he would want to study carefully such further advice as we might ourselves wish to offer in the light of public discussion and of comments received.

5. As soon as the Report was published in September, 1960, the teachers' and local authority associations primarily concerned were invited by the Council to send their comments, and these were received by the end of January, 1961. Copies of the Report were also sent both to the G.C.E. Examining Bodies and to the principal national and regional Bodies conducting examinations for secondary school pupils other than for the G.C.E.; and most of these sent comments. In addition, a number of bodies and individuals responded to the Minister's invitation to send views to the Council; and there was considerable comment in the Press. A list of the bodies and individuals who sent comments is given at Appendix B.

6. We have now studied all the comments that have been made, both by the associations primarily concerned and by the many other bodies and individuals who sent in their views; and we have had the benefit of some further observations from our Committee on matters of importance raised in the comments. We have been impressed by the extent of the interest aroused by the Report up and down the country, and by the thought and care which the bodies concerned, and others offering comments, have given to the issues raised; and we wish to express our indebtedness to all these bodies and individuals for the valuable contributions made by them to the discussion. We have ourselves considered very fully and carefully what advice we should now offer to the Minister in the light of our Committee's Report and of the comments received.

\*"Secondary School Examinations other than the G.C.E." H.M.S.O. 1960. Price 4s. 6d. net.

## Summary of comments on the Report

7. Analysis of the comments has shown that the main conclusion of the Report summarised in paragraph 2 above was endorsed by the principal associations of teachers and local authorities who were formally consulted, with the exception of the County Councils' Association, whose views were reported to be divided. There also appeared to be wide support for the Report's main conclusion from other interested bodies. A number of the existing non-G.C.E. Examining Bodies expressed a readiness to come into any scheme which might emerge, subject to individual reservations on certain points. The G.C.E. Examining Bodies had no major objections to raise to the scheme from their point of view. None of them (except the Welsh Joint Education Committee, which is in a special position) offered to participate in the scheme, and some stated explicitly that they would not wish to do so.

8. Amongst those who accepted the main conclusion of the Report, there was also wide support for the Committee's more specific recommendations about the kind of examinations that were needed and the way in which they might be organised. But there was more variety of opinion on these matters, and a number of bodies concerned had reservations or alternative suggestions on one or other aspect of the scheme proposed.

9. Opposition to the main conclusion of the Report was mainly of three kinds. On the one hand there were those who tended to regard all external examinations as intrinsically undesirable, and questioned the need to introduce at this time a new series of officially sponsored examinations below the G.C.E. level. On the other hand there were those who, while accepting the desirability of further provision of examinations to meet the needs of fifth year pupils in ability ranges below the first 20% of the age group, particularly those in non-selective schools and streams, rejected the view of the Committee that the G.C.E. examination was unsuitable for this purpose, and affirmed that that examination could be "widened" and adapted to meet all these needs. Thirdly, there were those, including certain of the non-G.C.E. Examining Bodies, who favoured a national system of external examinations for pupils completing a fourth year of secondary education.

## Objections of principle

10. Although, as we have said, the main conclusion of the Report was endorsed by most of the major teachers' and local authority associations, we think it right to offer some observations on the objections which have been raised. We first examine the objections of principle raised against the Report's main conclusion, and then go on to consider objections or alternative suggestions made by those accepting it. We must begin by pointing out that one main group of those objecting in principle is in one important respect in disagreement with the other two. The essential thesis of the first group is that external examinations are in themselves undesirable and that their further extension should be checked. The essential thesis of the second and third groups is that there should be further provision of external examinations. Their disagreement with our Committee concerns the way in which such examinations can best be provided.

(a) THOSE WHO OPPOSE ANY EXTENSION OF  
EXTERNAL EXAMINATIONS

11. The objections of the first group may be summarised as follows:

All external examinations tend to have a cramping effect on the curriculum and teaching of the schools, and the lower the level of ability for which the examinations are designed, the more liable they are to produce harmful effects. The creation of a new series of external examinations at a lower level than the G.C.E. would be specially likely to have these undesirable effects, particularly if the examinations were no more than a watered-down version of the G.C.E. examination, and also to limit the freedom of these schools to experiment and develop in new directions. Moreover, the existence of examinations at this lower level would enhance the sense of failure of those who failed in them, and of those who were not considered capable of attempting them; and if they were confined to pupils in their fifth year they would put at a disadvantage pupils in areas where deficiencies of accommodation and staffing in the schools made it difficult to provide sufficient courses for fifth year pupils. They would also tend to depreciate the value in the eyes of teachers and pupils, of non-examinable subjects.

12. While the exponents of this point of view do not deny the existence and growth of external examinations provided by independent Examining Bodies, or the widespread demand for such examinations, particularly among the teachers in the schools, they question on educational grounds the desirability of meeting this demand. They believe that many of the needs and preoccupations from which the demand originates might be better met in alternative ways which would be less liable to have undesirable educational effects, such as improved methods of assessment, or area schemes for external assessment of internal examinations (to this latter suggestion, which we regard as not necessarily incompatible with our proposals, we revert in paragraph 30 below). Finally, they believe that, while under present conditions schools which do not feel the need of external examinations are free to go their own way, the introduction of a national system of recognised external examinations below the G.C.E. level would gravely prejudice the position of teachers not convinced of their merits, and would thus irrevocably commit the non-selective schools as a whole to the principle of external examinations. They therefore urge that the time is inopportune for the Minister to take the initiative proposed by the Report, and that a further period of experiment is needed.

13. We note that this point of view was carefully considered by our Committee in their Report (paragraphs 89 to 97), but that they found themselves unable to accept it, mainly for two reasons. Firstly, they did not accept the major premise of its advocates that external examinations at the level proposed are necessarily harmful. On the contrary, they took the view, which the Central Advisory Council for Education (England) had also taken, that, if certain conditions are fulfilled, external examinations can make a constructive contribution to the educational process at this level as well as others; and they believed in addition that such examinations have a useful part to play in helping pupils to find the place in the community most suited to their abilities. This view we also accept. We believe that at this level examinations suitably devised can act as an incentive to pupils and teachers to do their best work, and that their good effect may often be seen not only amongst pupils examined but



throughout the school; and we also believe that the provision of examinations at the end of a five year course offers an aim which encourages pupils to stay on at school for a fifth year of secondary education. But we are clear that positive steps are needed to ensure that the examinations available are the best possible from the educational point of view. We think the possible objection that such examinations might put at a disadvantage children living in areas where there is at present insufficient provision for pupils wishing to stay on for a fifth year will progressively disappear with the implementation of the Government's policy for secondary education as set out in the White Paper of December, 1958.\*

14. Secondly, our Committee took the view that the case for postponing a decision rested on an insufficient realisation of the facts set out in their Report regarding the extent and rate of growth of external examinations provided by the independent non-G.C.E. bodies, particularly those designed for pupils in their fifth year. Since their Report was published, our Committee have been able to obtain for us more complete and up-to-date figures for candidates entering for the examinations of the main non-G.C.E. bodies which are designed for pupils in their fifth year, and we think that these are highly relevant. We have therefore set them out in Table I of Appendix C to this Report, together with such figures as are readily available for pupils from non-selective schools entering for the G.C.E. Ordinary level examination at 16 (i.e. those in their fifth year). The totals given in this Table must be regarded as approximations only, for reasons given in the notes. In Table II of the same Appendix an attempt has been made to calculate the numbers of pupils in secondary modern, all-age and "other" (non-selective) secondary schools who stay on to complete a fifth year and were therefore eligible for these examinations. These too must be regarded as no more than approximations. For the reasons given in the notes, great caution is needed in making deductions from a comparison of the totals in Table I with those in Table II. We, nevertheless, think that these figures strongly suggest the conclusion, which has been reinforced by other evidence which we have received, that the great majority, if not practically all, of the pupils remaining for a fifth year in the schools in question are being entered for external examinations. In this connection we would also draw attention to the information given in our Committee's Report (in paragraph 48 and in Table I of Appendix 6) which showed that a number of schools not yet using external examinations in 1958 had plans for doing so shortly, and indicated that the addition of these would bring the proportion of schools entering pupils for external examinations to over 80% of the schools in their sample inquiry. If these findings are even approximately valid, we would submit that the time is already past when it serves a useful purpose to debate *whether* these pupils in their fifth year should be externally examined. The question is *how* they should be examined, and whether the ways in which they are at present being examined are the most suitable, or could be improved.

*Other arguments adduced for postponing a decision*

15. Another argument which has been put forward in some of the comments for delaying a decision is that there are significant developments taking place in other fields which may result in a falling off in the demand for examinations

\*"Secondary Education for All. A New Drive." Cmd. 604. H.M.S.O. 9d.

below the level of the G.C.E. In this connection reference has been made to the recently published White Paper on Better Opportunities in Technical Education\*, and also to progress being made in methods of assessment other than by examinations. With regard to the White Paper, we think it right to mention that, when framing their proposals, our Committee were aware of the general outlines of the proposals subsequently developed in the White Paper, and that in the relevant passage of their Report (Chapter V, paragraphs 131 to 135) they made suggestions as to how the results of the examinations which they proposed might be of use to those in technical colleges who are responsible for assigning candidates to suitable courses of further education. We note that specific reference is made in the White Paper (paragraph 61) to the possible uses of the examinations proposed by our Committee for purposes of selection for the wider range of further education courses which will be available in the future. We also note that the comments of both the Association of Principals of Technical Institutions and the Association of Teachers in Technical Institutions welcomed the proposals in our Committee's Report, the former explicitly observing that the results of the proposed examinations would be likely to prove useful to those concerned with selection for further education courses.

16. With regard to the methods of assessment other than examinations, we do not doubt the importance of these and the value of the developments which are taking place. But we regard such developments as essentially complementary to proposals such as those made by our Committee for improving examination arrangements; and we do not believe that within the next five or ten years developments in the field of assessment and school records could be so far-reaching as to provide for pupils completing a fifth year of secondary education a satisfactory substitute, in the minds of parents, teachers, employers and others, for the results of suitably devised examinations. We note that the comments made by some employers, while stressing the importance of adequate school records, appeared to support this conclusion, since they too welcomed the main proposals of the Report regarding examinations and endorsed the Committee's proposal that the Minister of Education should himself take the initiative.

17. Some of those comments which advocated further delay recalled the proposal made by the Central Advisory Council for Education (England) that there should be a further five years' waiting period which would provide an opportunity for further experiment and inquiry. In fairness both to that Council and to our Committee we would point out that this proposal was made before our Committee's more detailed survey had brought to light the facts now known about the extent and rate of growth of external examinations below the G.C.E. level, and had drawn attention to the consequent dangers of a further waiting period. We would also recall, and express our agreement with, the view expressed in our Committee's Report (paragraph 96) that the present situation, in which external examinations below the G.C.E. level are provided by a number of independent bodies, has not in fact proved conducive to effective experiment and research. While fully sharing the views of the Central Advisory Council for Education (England) and those of our own Committee about the need for more extensive research, we think it likely that it is only within a

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\*Cmd. 1254. January, 1961. H.M.S.O. Price 1s. 3d. net.

system of recognised examinations, in which deliberate provision is made for experiment and research and examining authorities have a direct incentive to apply its findings, that research will be carried out on an adequate scale and with fruitful results. We return to this matter in paragraph 29 below.

(b) THOSE WHO WOULD PREFER EXTENDED USE OF THE  
G.C.E. EXAMINATION

18. We have also carefully considered the comments of those who, while by no means opposed in principle to further external examining to meet the needs of fifth year pupils in a wider ability range, are opposed to the setting-up of a new series of examinations other than the G.C.E., on the grounds that this would create difficulties for the schools and would accentuate the differences between selective and non-selective schools. Advocates of this point of view urge that all the needs described in our Committee's Report could and should be met by adaptations and extensions of the G.C.E. examination. Some have questioned the validity of the assumption made by our Committee that the G.C.E. Ordinary level examination taken in a range of four or more subjects is suitable only for a limited proportion of the age group, which in their Report they put at about 20 per cent. It has been urged that an increasing number of children below this ability range have been showing good results in the G.C.E. examination, and that with improved staffing in the non-selective schools the numbers would be likely to increase still further. Instances have been cited of secondary modern schools where a significant number of candidates who (presumably at the age of 11) were on a point on the I.Q. scale well below the minimum of the top 20 per cent. in the age group had achieved passes in four or more subjects at Ordinary level.

19. We do not doubt that instances may be found in particular districts or schools where pupils in ability ranges well below the top 20 per cent. at the age of 11 have achieved good results in the G.C.E. examination at the age of 16. By the same token we would expect some pupils who were in the top 20 per cent. at the age of 11 to show poor results in the G.C.E. examination. But what our Committee said was that there was only a limited proportion, which they put at about 20 per cent., of the age group at the age of 16 for whom the G.C.E. Ordinary level in a range of four or more subjects was a suitable examination; and they did not intend to suggest that intelligence tests made at 11 should determine which children should take a particular examination five years later.

20. It has also been suggested that a study of results achieved in the G.C.E. examination would throw doubt on our Committee's assumption. We therefore thought that it would be valuable to make some further studies on this point, and through our Committee we made inquiries of ten comprehensive schools in various parts of the country which have been in existence for five years or more. Replies were received from six of these schools, and the results are set out in Appendix D to this Report. Great care is clearly needed in drawing conclusions from these figures, having regard to the limited size of the sample, to the possible influence of such factors as the location of the schools and the character of the intake in the year in question, and to the fact that comprehensive schools are still at an early stage of their development. But they would seem to us, if anything, to confirm the validity of our Committee's assumption that the proportion of the age group for whom G.C.E. Ordinary level in a

range of four or more subjects is attainable is at present about 20 per cent. In any case we are sure that in indicating this figure our Committee intended only to provide a working approximation for such practical purposes as the initial definition of standards, and were not suggesting that this proportion should be regarded as in any way rigid or immutable. Moreover they made clear that in their view there would be pupils below this ability range who might reasonably attempt G.C.E. Ordinary level in two or three subjects, perhaps simultaneously attempting other subjects in some other examination.

21. We note that a number of those who advocated extended use of the G.C.E. examination as an alternative solution indicated that, if it were to be used for the purposes which they had in mind, its standards would have to be "widened" and its structure reformed. We think it important to make clear that in our opinion the changes in the standards, character and organisation of the G.C.E. examination which would be required to render it suitable for the bulk of the pupils with whom our Committee were primarily concerned would be such as to entail a radical transformation of that examination. We have no reason to think that those concerned with the G.C.E. examination are at present ready to contemplate such a transformation; and the comments of the G.C.E. Examining Bodies on our Committee's Report made it clear that (apart from the special case of the Welsh Joint Education Committee) they would be unlikely to consider accepting the large extra commitment involved. For all these reasons we are led to the same conclusion as our Committee with regard to the G.C.E. examination, namely, that while it is appropriate for a limited range of pupils, including an increasing number from non-selective schools and streams—and we share our Committee's view that all pupils in these schools able to attempt the G.C.E. examination in a fair range of subjects should be encouraged to do so—there is a large group of pupils in somewhat lower ranges of ability for whom the G.C.E. is not, and cannot be made, a suitable examination, and whose needs can be adequately met only by the provision of other examinations of a different standard and character, organised by different bodies.

(c) THOSE WHO SUPPORT EXTERNAL EXAMINATIONS FOR  
FOURTH YEAR PUPILS

22. We have noted that the comments of certain of the non-G.C.E. Examining Bodies urged the case for external examinations at the age of 15 for pupils completing a fourth year course of secondary education. Essentially, their argument is that so long as the statutory school leaving age remains at 15, there should be nationally recognised external examinations available for those leaving at that age. It is urged by one of these Bodies that this view is widely supported by teachers in some districts. The point is also made that children remaining for a fifth year in school to take examinations may have difficulties in securing apprenticeships on leaving. Our Committee were of the firm opinion, which was stated in paragraph 98 of their Report, that at this stage of the development of secondary education in this country the introduction of nationally recognised external examinations at the age of 15 for fourth year leavers would be a retrograde step, which would adversely affect the trend towards staying on at school until 16, and also, by offering the possibility of external examinations which can be taken as a preliminary to the G.C.E. examination, would be liable to lead to excessive examining in the schools. Having

considered the arguments for fourth year examinations, we fully endorse our Committee's conclusion on this matter. We note that it was also in general endorsed by the principal teachers' associations in their comments.

### Further comments affecting the main conclusions

23. We now make observations on certain further comments which, while they came from bodies approving our Committee's conclusion in the main, seemed to us to raise issues of major importance with regard to their positive proposals.

#### AGE LIMIT

24. We note that some of the teachers' organisations, while, as indicated in paragraph 22 above, they accepted in general the proposal that the examinations should be taken at 16, urged that teachers should have the same discretion to enter pupils below the age of 16 which they have in the case of the G.C.E. examination. If this means no more than that teachers would be free to enter pupils completing a fifth year course before their sixteenth birthday, that would seem to be both reasonable and consistent with the intentions of our Committee's Report. But if it means that heads should have discretion to enter their abler pupils before the end of a fifth year, we would regard such an arrangement as being open to very serious objection. The arrangements for the G.C.E. examination do not, in our view, provide a parallel. If heads have pupils who, though not selected at 11, turn out to have sufficient ability to attempt the proposed examinations at 15, we presume that they would be able to attempt the G.C.E. examination, probably at 16, and we think that for such pupils this would be the proper solution. We are glad to note that there is a growing number of schools other than grammar schools in which the G.C.E. examination is taken; and we assume that, in the case of pupils in schools where it is not at present taken, a transfer could normally be arranged.

#### A "SUBJECT" NOT A "GROUP" EXAMINATION

25. We have carefully considered the comments of those who favoured a "group" examination (or an examination with compulsory subjects) as against an examination with a completely free choice of subjects. We note that this was an issue on which there was considerable difference of opinion both as between one commenting body and another, and in some cases within individual bodies offering comments. A number of comments urged that some form of group certificate was necessary to ensure that pupils received a broad education, and some favoured compulsory English, and possibly also mathematics and even science. But the weight of opinion appeared to be in favour of a "subject" examination with no compulsory subjects. We see no reason to differ from our Committee's decision (explained in paragraphs 62 and 114 of their Report) in favour of a subject examination. We believe that a group examination, besides curtailing the freedom of the teacher to devise courses suited to individual pupils, and adding to the examination pressures on certain pupils, is open to the further objection that it would tend to exaggerate the stratification amongst pupils, and also amongst schools, to which examinations are in any event liable to give rise. If the new examinations were to contain a group requirement, a clear division would emerge between those who would attempt G.C.E. Ordinary level, those who would attempt the new examinations and those who were unable to attempt any external examination. Under our

Committee's proposals the gradations would be much less clear cut, since, in addition to a group concentrating on the G.C.E. examination, there could be a group who would in the same year take G.C.E. Ordinary level in some subjects and the examinations proposed by our Committee in others; and in addition to those taking the examinations proposed in a broad range of subjects, there could be yet others attempting them in one or two subjects only. We believe that it can and should be left to the schools to ensure that pupils are given a suitably wide course of education; and English is a subject so essential for all pupils that it must be assumed that schools will give due attention to it, in ways suited to the varying needs and capacities of their pupils, without the compulsion of an examination requirement.

#### RELATIONSHIP OF THE PROPOSED EXAMINATIONS AND THE G.C.E. ORDINARY LEVEL

26. Several of the comments drew attention to the difficulties which might be caused in individual schools by the fact of having two examinations available at different levels, and probably with different syllabuses, and of having either to require their pupils to choose between them or to prepare pupils for both; and we note the concern of the Welsh Joint Education Committee that this will raise special problems in some Welsh grammar schools. Some comments suggested that the two examinations should be held simultaneously so that there would be no possibility of candidates being entered for both. Others went to the other extreme and proposed that heads should have complete freedom to enter candidates for both examinations, not only in different subjects but in the same subject or subjects. We would be strongly opposed to any arrangement which allowed schools to enter pupils for both examinations in the same subject or subjects in the same year as a measure of insurance. But we would also be opposed, for reasons given in the preceding paragraph, to an arrangement for the simultaneous holding of the two examinations which would prevent candidates from taking some subjects in one examination and some in the other. We can see that the fact of both examinations being available will give rise to difficulties in some schools. But these are difficulties which already arise, and will continue to arise even if no scheme for new examinations is agreed, wherever the examinations of the independent non-G.C.E. bodies are available alongside the G.C.E. examination. We believe that these are difficulties which it is within the competence of the teachers in the schools to overcome.

#### PUPILS NOT CONSIDERED SUITABLE FOR EXAMINATIONS

27. Some of the comments emphasised the problem which would be created, if the proposed examinations were brought into being, for pupils in the lower ability ranges who would be judged unsuitable to take them. We note that our Committee were not unaware of this problem, and referred to it in their Report (paragraph 113). They took the view that for the most part it was not a problem of immediate urgency, since in most areas of the country few pupils in ability ranges for which such examinations are inappropriate remain for a fifth year in school. They realised that it would become a more general problem in the future. But they thought it was one which could be met, and is in some schools being effectively met, by methods other than examinations. They had evidence that in some schools children in these ability ranges had in fact been encouraged

to stay on at school by the example of other children staying on to take examinations, and had derived considerable benefit though not taking the examinations themselves. In any case they were convinced that it would not be right to deprive the abler children of the opportunity to take suitable and properly devised examinations because there were others for whom the examinations were not suitable. We concur with this view. We venture to suggest that the methods of meeting the needs of children remaining for a fifth year at school who are thought unsuitable for examinations might be an appropriate matter for inquiry by the reconstituted Central Advisory Council for Education (England) under their new terms of reference.\*

#### CENTRAL MACHINERY FOR CO-ORDINATION

28. We note that one comment which supported the proposed scheme as a whole objected to our Committee's proposal that the co-ordinating body at the centre should be a Standing Committee of the Secondary School Examinations Council, and urged the setting up of an entirely separate body. This suggestion seems to us to be open to a twofold objection. It would mean that there would be two entirely separate bodies advising the Minister on examinations in secondary schools; and it would tend to emphasise, in the minds of teachers, parents and others, the differences and disparity between the two examinations. We share the view of our Committee that if these new examinations come into being, the task of supervising them would fall properly within our terms of reference as the Secondary School Examinations Council, and that we should accept general responsibility for them, with such modifications of our constitution and membership as may be thought desirable. We would no doubt find it convenient to delegate the responsibility for keeping under review the more detailed working of the scheme to an appropriately constituted Standing Committee of our number. Since we think that one of the grounds for the objection referred to may have been the assumption that the new examinations would also be subject to the scrutiny of the Council's existing Subject Panels, we should make it clear that this was not our Committee's intention, since they had it in mind that, insofar as questions of content and syllabuses needed to be considered centrally, these would be the concern of the new research and development unit which they proposed should be set up to work in conjunction with the Standing Committee. This seems to us to be a suitable arrangement.

#### PROVISION FOR RESEARCH AND EXPERIMENT

29. We note that a number of comments, including some of those of the existing non-G.C.E. Examining Bodies, welcomed what was said in the Report about the need for systematic research on examinations, and approved our Committee's proposal for a central research and development unit; and we ourselves strongly endorse this proposal. We also note in this connection that some of the comments suggested the need for experiments in the field, or "pilot schemes", for the purpose of determining the lines of the new examinations. If this term was intended to cover small beginnings, or experimental schemes in particular regions, within the framework of a general scheme for the country,

\*These are "To consider the education between the ages of 13 and 16 of pupils of average or less than average ability who are or will be following full-time courses either at schools or in establishments of further education. The term 'education' shall be understood to include extra-curricular activities."

we would welcome the idea and indeed would hope that the new examinations would develop by these means. But if it was intended that all further action to initiate a new scheme of examinations should await the outcome of such pilot schemes, we would regard the suggestion with grave disquiet. Experiments of this kind could hardly be expected to show significant results in less than three or four years. But it was one of the main contentions of our Committee's Report that action on it should not be unduly delayed, and on this we fully share their view. In the three or four years needed for the experiments the examinations provided by the independent bodies would continue uncontrolled, and their growth would continue unchecked. Moreover, there might be difficulty in the present circumstances of free competition amongst Examining Bodies in finding pupils whose parents were ready to risk their participating in the experimental examinations.

30. There are in our view grounds for thinking that experimental schemes would have more chances of success and of showing the way to improved techniques of examination and assessment, if they were conducted within the framework of a generally agreed scheme and in conjunction with the proposed research and development unit. We see no reason why some regional bodies should not conduct experimental schemes for some schools or parts of their region, and we think that there would be advantages in such an arrangement. There might, for example, be further experiments with schemes of awards based on external assessment of internal school examinations over particular areas, somewhat on the lines originally indicated in the 1947 Report of the Secondary School Examinations Council. In any case, we assume that all the arrangements for these new examinations would be experimental in the sense that they would be subject to review after a period of years, possibly as part of some more general review of the arrangements for examining and assessing pupils completing secondary school courses at or about the age of 16.

#### PROBLEMS OF IMPLEMENTATION

31. We have also considered a number of other comments and suggestions which were made by bodies and individuals approving the proposals in main outline, on particular aspects of the scheme proposed, as for example the number of Regional Examining Bodies needed or the areas over which they should operate. We note that our Committee in framing their proposals deliberately limited themselves so far as possible to indicating main principles rather than elaborating detail, as regards both the character of the examinations proposed and the structure of the examining arrangements, because they wished to leave detailed planning to those responsible for implementing the scheme and thought it important to leave room for flexibility. We believe this to have been an appropriate method of approach in the circumstances, and in consequence it would seem to us that there is ample scope within the proposed scheme for experiment and diversity in different areas. We also think that some of the suggestions which have been put forward as alternatives to the proposed scheme may be capable of being operated within it. This might well apply in particular to the suggestion for further experiments in schemes of internal examinations externally assessed to which we referred above. We think that questions such as these, together with such matters as the precise number of Examining Bodies required, the identity and constitution of the bodies and the areas over which they should operate, and the question whether the examina-



tions should be available for candidates no longer at school, are matters which call for further detailed consideration and discussion with potential users of the examinations and with any of the existing Examining Bodies who may wish to be consulted, if and when the main conclusions are accepted by the Minister.

### Summary and Conclusions

32. We have noted that the great majority of the bodies primarily concerned have endorsed the main conclusions of our Committee's Report summarised in paragraph 2 above, and that they are widely supported amongst other interested bodies. Having examined the objections and alternative suggestions, we have taken the view that they are not such as to justify a modification of these main conclusions. We are therefore convinced that we should recommend the Minister to accept, without delay, the general proposition that there should be subject examinations on a regional basis, largely and effectively under the control of teachers, co-ordinated by a central body which would be assisted by a research and development unit and on the advice of which the Minister's recognition would be given, the examinations to be designed for a lower level of ability than the G.C.E. examination and to be taken at the end of not less than five years of secondary education. We propose that the further detailed discussion on the implementation of the scheme should await the Minister's decision on this general proposition. If the Minister decides in favour of it, we would wish ourselves to be given the opportunity of considering and advising him on the arrangements for implementing it.

# Appendix A

(see paragraph 1)

## Membership of the Committee on Secondary School Examinations other than the G.C.E. (with positions held at the time of appointment in July 1958)

- Mr. R. BELOE, C.B.E., M.A. (*Chairman*)  
Chief Education Officer, Surrey.
- Dr. W. P. (now Sir WILLIAM) ALEXANDER, L.H.D., Ph.D., Ed.B., M.A., B.Sc.,  
F.B.Ps.S., General Secretary, Association of Education Committees.
- Mr. E. L. BRITTON, M.A.  
Headmaster, County Secondary Mixed School, Warlingham, Surrey.
- Mr. C. E. DODGSON, M.A.\*  
Headmaster, Foxford County Secondary (Comprehensive) School,  
Grange Road, Coventry.
- Miss O. M. HASTINGS, M.A.  
Secretary, Association of Assistant Mistresses Incorporated.
- Dr. A. HAY, M.A.  
Chief Inspector, Education Department, London County Council.
- Mr. H. WYN JONES, M.A., B.Sc.  
Secretary, Welsh Joint Education Committee.
- Miss G. WENNINGER, M.A.\*  
Headmistress, Violet Markham County Secondary School,  
Chesterfield, Derbyshire.
- |                               |   |  |
|-------------------------------|---|--|
| Mr. D. A. ROUTH               | } | <i>Assessors,<br/>Ministry of Education.</i> |
| Mr. J. W. WITHRINGTON, H.M.I. |   |  |
| Mr. C. W. MORRIS, H.M.I.      | } | <i>Joint Secretaries.</i>                    |
| Mr. K. W. MORRIS              |   |  |
- Mr. T. F. Gilbert, Headmaster, North Modern Boys' School, Ashford, Kent, attended as an observer from the Central Advisory Council for Education (England) until December 1959.

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\*Co-opted.

## Appendix B

(see paragraph 5)

List of bodies and individuals who submitted written comments on the proposals in the Report on Secondary School Examinations other than the G.C.E.

### A. TEACHERS' AND LOCAL AUTHORITY ASSOCIATIONS WHICH WERE FORMALLY CONSULTED

#### (i) *Teachers' associations*

Association of Principals of Technical Institutions  
Association of Teachers in Technical Institutions  
Headmasters' Conference  
Joint Committee of the Four Secondary Associations:  
    Association of Assistant Mistresses, Incorporated  
    Association of Head Mistresses, Incorporated  
    Incorporated Association of Assistant Masters  
    Incorporated Association of Head Masters  
National Union of Teachers

#### (ii) *Local authority associations*

Association of Education Committees  
Association of Municipal Corporations  
County Councils' Association  
London County Council  
Welsh Joint Education Committee

### B. OTHER TEACHERS' ASSOCIATIONS

National Association of Head Teachers  
National Association of Labour Teachers

### C. LOCAL AUTHORITIES

London County Council  
York West Riding County Council  
Birmingham County Borough Council  
Leeds County Borough Council  
Northampton County Borough Council  
Sheffield County Borough Council  
Finchley Borough Council  
Harrow Borough Council  
Rhayader Parish Council (Radnor)

### D. EXAMINING BODIES FOR THE GENERAL CERTIFICATE OF EDUCATION

Associated Examining Board for the General Certificate of Education  
Durham University Matriculation and School Examination Board  
Northern Universities' Joint Matriculation Board  
Oxford Delegacy of Local Examinations  
Southern Universities' Joint Board for School Examinations  
Welsh Joint Education Committee

E. OTHER EXAMINING BODIES

City and Guilds of London Institute  
College of Preceptors  
East Midland Educational Union  
London Chamber of Commerce (Inc.)  
Northern Counties Technical Examinations Council  
Royal Society of Arts  
Union of Educational Institutions  
Union of Lancashire and Cheshire Institutes

F. OTHER BODIES AND INDIVIDUALS

British Employers' Confederation  
Communist Party of Great Britain  
Dr. S. E. J. Best, Headmaster, Doncaster Grammar School  
Professor H. L. Elvin, Director, University of London Institute of Education  
Professor Boris Ford, Director, University of Sheffield Institute of Education  
Mr. Alan Milton, Director, University of Exeter Institute of Education  
Ealing Heads of secondary modern schools  
Southall Heads of secondary modern schools  
Mr. N. Worley, London  
Mrs. E. Lockwood, Birmingham day release teacher, and 4 pupils

## Appendix C

(see paragraph 14)

### External examinations taken by certain pupils in the fifth year of their secondary school course

TABLE I

Candidates from maintained schools entering for external examinations at or about 16:	1958	1959	1960
(a) G.C.E. candidates from modern and all-age schools ... ..	8,700	12,800	17,400
(b) G.C.E. candidates from "other secondary" schools ... ..	(not available)		
(c) College of Preceptors Senior Certificate ...	50	100	200
(d) London Chamber of Commerce School Certificate ... ..	11,000	11,000	11,000
(e) Royal Society of Arts School Certificate ...	3,900	6,800	8,600
(f) East Midland Educational Union Secondary School Certificate ... ..	—	—	400
(g) Union of Educational Institutions Secondary School Certificate ... ..	700	1,600	3,400
(h) Union of Lancashire and Cheshire Institutes Secondary School Certificate ... ..	1,900	3,300	4,600
(j) Examinations intended for students in Further Education Institutions ... ..	(not available)		
<b>TOTAL (to nearest 1,000) ... ..</b>	<b>26,000</b>	<b>36,000</b>	<b>46,000</b>

TABLE II

### Pupils in non-selective schools (other than comprehensive, bilateral and multilateral):

(i) Aged 15 on 1st January ... ..	42,600	52,400	66,400
(ii) Those in (i) estimated to be in fifth year ...	21,300	26,200	33,200
(iii) Aged 16 on 1st January ... ..	6,900	9,700	12,200
<b>TOTAL fifth year (estimated as at (ii) and (iii) above) ... ..</b>	<b>28,200</b>	<b>35,900</b>	<b>45,400</b>
<b>TOTAL fifth year (extracted from returns from schools) ... ..</b>	<b>(not available) 44,500</b>		

# NOTES ON TABLE I

1. Line (a) shows only G.C.E. candidates from modern and all-age schools who were aged 16, i.e. in their fifth year. The number of candidates of all ages from those schools were 10,500, 15,600, and 21,700 respectively. In line (b) "other secondary" means non-selective secondary schools other than those in (a) and comprehensive, bilateral and multilateral schools.
2. Whilst figures in lines (a) and (b) relate to non-selective (modern all-age and "other secondary") schools only, those in lines (c) to (h) may include candidates from comprehensive, multilateral, bilateral and in some cases from selective schools. Candidates from independent schools have been excluded.
3. The London Chamber of Commerce have explained that, of approximately 50,000 candidates each year, two-fifths take the elementary examination. Of these 80-90 per cent. are in full-time secondary education, mostly in their fifth year, and of those in school, two-thirds are in maintained schools. This means that the number of candidates shown at (d) is correct only within plus or minus 2,000.
4. Totals in this Table have been inserted to the nearest thousand. It should be borne in mind that their accuracy is of the order of plus or minus 2,500.
5. Some candidates may enter for more than one examination in the same year, e.g. where subject examinations enable a candidate to take some subjects in one examination and some in another.

# NOTE ON TABLE II

6. The figures given at (i) and (iii) are derived from returns from schools. The figures at (ii) have been estimated on the simplified assumptions that all pupils transferred to secondary schools between the ages of 11.0 and 12.0 on 1st September, that the same number were born in each month of the year, and that, after making an allowance for those who left during the fourth year, about half the pupils aged 15 on 1st January would have been in the fourth year of their secondary school course, and the remainder in their fifth year. It will be seen that the estimate made on these assumptions for the year 1960 was accurate within 1,000 of the total for that year extracted from an actual count from returns from schools. (This itself can only be considered accurate within plus or minus 500.)

## Appendix D

(see paragraph 20)

### Examination record of certain comprehensive school pupils

1. In January 1961 ten comprehensive schools in various parts of the country which had been in existence for five years or more were invited to supply information about the achievements of their pupils in the G.C.E. Ordinary level examination. Replies were received from six of these schools, and the results are set out in the attached Table. The figures relate in each case to certain pupils in the schools in the year 1957. Columns 1 to 6 show, for each school, the results achieved by such of these pupils as entered for the G.C.E. Ordinary level examination in any year while they were still at the school.

2. An aggregation of these results for pupils in all six schools taken together is given in column 7. From this it will be seen that for all six schools the proportion of all pupils entering in 1957 who obtained four or more passes at G.C.E. Ordinary level before leaving was 15 per cent. As there was some reason to think that the figure for one school (school VI in the Table) might have been substantially affected by special circumstances, a column has been added (column 8) aggregating the results for the five schools I to V only. For these it will be seen that the proportion obtaining four or more passes was 19 per cent.

EXAMINATION RECORDS OF CERTAIN PUPILS IN SIX COMPREHENSIVE SCHOOLS

Number of pupils in 1957	1 School I (Metropolitan)		2 School II (North Wales)		3 School III (Midlands)		4 School IV (Yorkshire)		5 School V (North Wales)		6 School VI (Metropolitan)		7 Total I-VI		8 Total I-V	
	218 (a)		221 (a)		305 (a)		190 (a)		83 (b)		460 (a)		1,477		1,017	
	A	B	A	B	A	B	A	B	A	B	A	B	A	B	A	B
Pupils in line above who before leaving school entered for G.C.E. "O" level.	112		130		127		55		19		187		630		443	
and who passed in:																
5 subjects or more	37	17	32	14	33	11	27	14	16	19	21	5	166	11	145	14
4 subjects	10		12		7		15		2		10		56		46	
4 subjects or more	47	22	44	20	40	13	42	22	18	22	31	7	222	15	191	19
3 subjects	14		14		19		2		1		28		78		50	
3 subjects or more	61	28	58	26	59	19	44	23	19	23	59	13	300	20	241	24
2 subjects	20		17		18		6				34		95		61	
2 subjects or more	81	37	75	34	77	25	50	26	19	23	93	20	395	27	302	30
1 subject	18		28		34		3				42		125		83	
1 subject or more	99	45	103	47	111	36	53	28	19	23	135	29	520	35	385	36
No subject	13		27		16		2				52		110		58	
Subject passes in G.C.E. "O" level:																
Subject passes: Total per candidate	362	3.3	344	2.7	333	2.6	243	4.4	107	5.6	360	1.9	1,749	2.8	1,389	3.1

Notes: (a) Fourth year pupils at the beginning of the Autumn Term, 1957.  
(b) Third year pupils at the beginning of the Spring Term, 1957.

Columns: A. Number of candidates.  
B. Cumulative total of candidates passing.